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Review of "Malaysia and the "Original People": A Case Study of the  
Impact of Development on Indigenous Peoples" by Robert Knox  
Dentan, Kirk Endicott, Alberto G. Gomes and A.B. Hooker

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expressed in somatization, fantasy, and the appearance of visions, all of which are interpreted as symptoms of the *balien*'s predisposing illness." The role of *balien*, he thinks, provides "a socially acceptable and culturally meaningful way for women to resolve this conflict between sexual energy and passivity" (p. 153). I am not convinced. If, as Bernstein thinks, there was a universal association between 'male' and 'dominance' and 'female' with 'subordination' (p. 152) and passivity, the association could not explain differences from one population to the other. But one need not go beyond Borneo to see that this association is *not* universal; nor does Bernstein substantiate his assertion even for the Taman. A comparison of Borneo religions may provide clues to explain this variable gender distribution of religious specialists.

Overall, this book is written in a clear and straightforward manner; it is ethnographically rich, and will be of interest for anyone who is interested in ritual healing.

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*Malaysia and the "Original People": A Case Study of the Impact of Development on Indigenous Peoples.* By ROBERT KNOX DENTAN, KIRK ENDICOTT, ALBERTO G. GOMES, and A. B. HOOKER. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997. xv, 175 pp.

This book chronicles the plight of the *Orang Asli*, the "original people" of the Malay Peninsula, who currently make up less than one percent of the population of West Malaysia. Like many other foraging and swidden groups elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the *Orang Asli* have been denied legal ownership of their ancestral lands, which have been logged off for the enrichment of state governments and wealthy entrepreneurs, and appropriated for plantations, golf courses, highways, and other "developmentally sound" projects. Drawing on a combination of personal, long term ethnographic research with different *Orang Asli* groups and selective use of secondary sources, the four joint authors of this volume present a concise and powerful indictment of the attitudes and policies of Malay elites toward the *Orang Asli* over time.

According to these authors, the deterioration and destruction of *Orang Asli* habitats and cultures in Peninsular Malaysia is not the inevitable "price of progress," but the product of specific Malaysian government policies for which there are alternatives. As they note in their introduction, one of the key issues has revolved around the question of indigenous status, a designation that has awarded Malays and the natives of Malaysian Borneo both the explicit protection of the King and special rights in land ownership, education, government employment, and numerous other areas. The exclusion of the *Orang Asli* from this special status, while never explained directly by the government, is attributed by the authors to a "deliberate, albeit covert, government policy" (p.72) to assimilate the *Orang Asli* into Malay culture.

Linguistically and culturally diverse, the *Orang Asli* are officially divided into twenty-one different groups, with ancestral lands spanning the peninsula. The book's second chapter offers brief ethnographic descriptions of the socioeconomic and cultural practices of four different *Orang Asli* groups prior to their most recent loss of lands and livelihood. The historic interactions between *Orang Asli* and (usually more powerful) outsiders are related in the next chapter, which describes their descent from

trading partners, to the objects of slave raids, and then to dependents of Malay traders. Largely ignored by British colonial authorities, the jungle dwelling Orang Asli finally attracted concerted government attention during the Malayan Emergency (1948–60), when the threat of Orang Asli support for (mostly Chinese) communist guerrillas prompted the first government provisions of limited education and medical care and led to the establishment of a special federal agency to oversee their welfare.

The failure of the Department of Orang Asli Affairs to protect Orang Asli land rights and the involvement of this department in the government's efforts to convert Orang Asli to Islam are described in the next two chapters. The handling of Orang Asli land rights is particularly egregious: Malay applicants are often given preference for Orang Asli lands that Orang Asli themselves may not apply for (pp. 75–76), while in the regroupment schemes designed to serve as the government's solution to the "Orang Asli problem," Orang Asli are denied permanent ownership of the land they have been allocated (p. 120). Numerous examples are given of the failure of these regroupment schemes to provide acceptable alternatives to the traditional habitats of the Orang Asli, who are described as increasingly demoralized but nevertheless resistant to insistent pressures to convert to Islam and become Malay.

This volume draws on materials from a variety of sources, including a number of less accessible works published in Malaysia, to present a clearly written and coherent argument that supports the rights of the Orang Asli to preserve their own cultural identities and to determine their own futures. Written for undergraduate students and general readers, I would also highly recommend this book to Malaysian and Southeast Asian specialists for its clear overview and its insightful analysis of the plight of Malaysia's true original peoples. Of course, the book's most important audience ought to be Malaysians themselves, particularly those government officials with the power to challenge and change current policies. Unfortunately, as the authors acknowledge, their book, like similar publications, must confront the current government's negative attitudes about foreign criticism and its clear control of the local press. Nevertheless, they refuse to remain silent observers of a type of cultural destruction that is convincingly depicted as both unfair and alterable.

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*Historical Dictionary of the Philippines.* By ARTEMIO R. GUILLERMO and MAY KYI WIN. Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, 1997. xi, 363 pp. \$62.00.

As a historical dictionary, this is a disgrace. It is so full of questionable statements and outright errors that a 1,000-word review cannot begin to do justice to them. To single out a few of the most egregious:

- The description of the Philippines as peopled by "tribes" who came in three "waves" (Aetas, "Indonesians" and "Malays") reflects early twentieth-century theorizing, long abandoned by serious anthropologists and prehistorians.
- For nearly thirty years now the Code of Kalantiao (pp. 60–61) has been known to be a complete forgery.
- Ma-I was not the "Chinese name for Manila" (p. 185), but referred to Mindoro.
- Encomiendas were not "landed estates of the Spaniards" (p. 81); they represented control over people, not land. They did not, therefore, produce "tobacco for export